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INTRODUCTION.

THE author of this little essay scarcely knows what apology to make for presuming to appear before the public in a science which has afforded employment for the pens of so many learned men, and able naturalists.

What he has here attempted is to bring together and illustrate the British proper Ferns; no attempt of the kind having ever before appeared in our own, or any other language. The greatest part of them have indeed been figured and described, but many of those figures are too inaccurate to give a clear and distinct idea of the plant, and being scattered through the volumes of many authors, will subject to a very great expence, those who are desirous to inform themselves of a tribe of plants so singular and beautiful as the British proper Ferns must be allowed to be.

It is the intention of the author in this undertaking to give a clear and distinct idea of every species in its various stages of growth, and under the various accidents it is liable to, as far as is necessary for enabling the student to discriminate each with ease and certainty; to exhibit them at one view, and at a small expence. And if it appears that he has acquitted himself well in these particulars, he wishes not for a more eligible plea.